CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE FIVE HUNDRED AND NINETIETH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 28 March 1991, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Serguei B. Batsanov (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics)

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The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): I declare open the 590th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Today I have on my list of speakers the distinguished representative of Zaire, Mr. Mantuba, to whom I should now like to give the floor.

Mr. MANTUBA (Zaire) (translated from French): Mr. President, allow me to extend to you my warm congratulations upon your election to the head of the Conference on Disarmament for the month of March. We hope that your cognitive skills and your qualities as an outstanding diplomat will be placed at the disposal of the Conference for its smooth running. My congratulations also go to the eminent ambassadors of Sweden, Mr. Hyltenius, and Sri Lanka, Mr. Rasaputram, who, thanks to their intelligence, dedication and diplomatic experience, have enabled the Conference to attain certain substantial results to which our Conference aspires. To all the new ambassadors who have joined the family of the Conference on Disarmament I wish good luck and every success in the discharge of their functions.

Mr. President, your country, the Soviet Union, one of the super-Powers of the world, has excellent diplomatic relations with my country, Zaire. We hope that the presence of a super-Power at the head of our presidency will settle many of the problems that sometimes paralyse the smooth functioning of our Conference.

The world has just experienced a painful crisis that led to the loss of several human lives; I refer to the Gulf conflict. During this dramatic period Zaire, my country, occupied the presidency of the Security Council and performed those functions in a worthy manner. As can be seen, the Gulf crisis was the most severe test that the international community has faced since the end of the Second World War. Practically all the States of the world condemned Iraq's aggression against Kuwait. My country's diplomatic contribution played a very outstanding role. We wished to side with those States that were determined to defend and re-establish the sovereignty of a State attacked and annexed by a neighbouring country belonging to the Non-Aligned Movement. It was in this context that Zaire supported all the resolutions voted by the Security Council to re-establish and rehabilitate international law.

Nobody is unaware of the fact that arms have spoken in the Middle East and more especially in the Gulf. The most diabolical military arsenal since the end of the Second World War was used at last to apply the resolutions of the world organization which in the past were reviled by those very persons who had helped to set it up. The Gulf war also enabled the highly industrialized States to test the efficiency and sophistication of their weapons. Militarily speaking the Gulf conflict has taught us the wrong strategic lesson. Far from believing in a rapid policy of disarmament, this war, if the strategists of the policy of international equilibrium do not take care, will create a regrettable precedent and will indeed accentuate the arms proliferation race. Such a proliferation, based not only on strategic but rather on mercantilist objectives, will be a serious monumental aberration for mankind, since it will further encourage competition between manufacturing industries in arms-producing countries.

(Mr. Mantuba, Zaire)

My country is happy to see the USSR, one of the world's military super-Powers, now occupying the Chair of the Conference. We hope that the political influence of your State will play an important role to move the progress of our work forward and, if possible, to succeed in laying certain new foundations that will enable the Conference to sign at the very least a treaty on one of the items on the agenda. To my mind the Conference on Disarmament seems to be sick, suffering from an illness that is difficult to cure. There can be no cure as long as the interlinked interests of all the militarily well-armed States are at stake. These stakes prevent the major Powers from concluding treaties and conventions on the various items on the agenda of our Conference. If we are not in a position to reach this point, it would be desirable to revert to the proposal made last year here in the plenary by the eminent Ambassador of Peru, Mr. Oswaldo de Rivero, who said:

> "In view of this new context in world history, with the rituals of our work, it would be preferable for the Conference on Disarmament to pause and reflect. It is a matter of knowing whether the Conference on Disarmament is capable of taking into account the changes that have occurred on the world scene or whether it is going to confine itself to reshuffing its old ideas."

In my humble opinion the Conference has neither reflected nor paused to see to what extent the changes that have occurred could reorient our Organization. Just recently, the regret expressed by the august representative of Peru, Dr. Calderón, on the Conference's inability, over a period of nearly 12 years, to conclude even a treaty on one of the items on the agenda, shows sufficiently well the seriousness of the illness from which our Conference is suffering. But if we really cannot perform the main function for which this organ was created, what can be its justification? Unless we are careful, the Conference on Disarmament runs the risk of becoming a debating society for plenipotentiaries whose main purpose is merely to set forth and highlight their different points of view. How could you explain that to this day we are still in the midst of doubts and hesitations and consultations to find a decisive solution concerning the expansion of the membership of the Conference? It is, moreover, surprising to find that certain States are opposed to increasing the number of members from 39 to 44. It is high time for the Conference to be flexible on this subject; because our common aim is to bring about a new network of international security relationships where each State, big or small, must make its modest contribution. Whether members, observers or others, every time world peace is threatened, all world States experience a lack of security and all have the same concern - peace. It is true that the Conference's overall record is not totally negative; for it is agreeable to acknowledge the establishment of certain ad hoc committees on a few items on the agenda. But what course will they take, and what will their aim be? For instance, taking agenda item 1 on nuclear testing, the eminent Ambassador of Morocco, Mr. Benhima, was among the outstanding speakers last year who deplored the fact that the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban did not have a negotiating mandate. I am afraid that this year the situation will be almost identical. Nothing will surprise us when we bear in mind that the interests of these five major nuclear-weapon Powers are closely connected. As regards chemical weapons, as everybody knows, their history is the longest

(Mr. Mantuba, Zaire)

in all multilateral negotiations on disarmament. Sixty-five years after the adoption of the Geneva Protocol in 1925, the international community still has no convention banning all chemical weapons. What has become of the enthusiasm generated by the 1989 Paris Conference on the convention banning the production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons? As time passes, all the speeches, promises and initiatives seem today to have evaporated into the clouds, and the threat of their use remains. Where is the political resolve of the international community?

Mr. President, the peace and security of the world is in the hands of the Soviet Union and the United States of America. You alone hold the most threatening and the most deadly quantity on Earth. Your country, the Soviet Union, possesses a gigantic military machine, which imposes a crushing burden on the world scene. The same is true of the United States, which in geopolitical terms is still the only military, economic, political and ideological super-Power on Earth. Western Europe and Japan have known economic success; exploiting its size and demographic power, China makes use of it as an element of political influence. All these factors make you inevitable protagonists in all aspects of world power. This singularity imposes on you a heavy responsibility in building the future of the world in general and that of the Conference on Disarmament in particular.

As for the third world countries, which are used to being left on the sidelines by the major Powers, they are always cast in the role of poor relations. I think that the time has come to put the clocks right and to take account of the importance and the contributions of all States. Otherwise our Conference will not be able to attain the objectives it has set itself. That will be a major risk, not to say political suicide which could lead us towards the path of slaughter.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): I thank the distinguished representative of Zaire for his statement and for his kind words concerning my country, the good relations between Zaire and the USSR and also myself. Before proceeding with other business I should like to know whether any other delegation would like to take the floor at this stage. I see none.

As you know, this is the last plenary meeting of the first part of the annual session. In order to ensure that no time is wasted in the organization of our work at the opening of the second part, I have requested the secretariat to distribute today the timetable of meetings to be held by the Conference and its subsidiary bodies during the first week of that session. As indicated in the timetable, work will be resumed on Tuesday, 14 May. I wish to note that the plenary meeting to be held on Thursday, 16 May will start at 11 a.m. rather than at 10 a.m. as is the custom. There are already two high-level visitors on the list of speakers for that day, and in order to facilitate the organizational arrangements relating to one of these visits we shall proceed as indicated. It goes without saying that the timetable now proposed for your attention is merely indicative and can be changed if necessary. On that customary understanding I recommend its adoption. If there are no objections we shall proceed in that manner.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): I would like to draw your attention to one other point. In accordance with rule 11 of the rules of procedure, I invited the group co-ordinators to distribute for consideration at the meetings of the groups held yesterday morning the draft of a letter to be addressed by me to the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva concerning parking in the inner courtyard of the Palais des Nations. So far the groups have raised no objections to the text under consideration. I have conducted bilateral consultations with some delegations that have made comments; as a result of those consultations an understanding was reached that the text of the letter would remain unchanged. Accordingly I shall proceed to send the letter as drafted.

Now, with your permission, I would like to take the floor myself as Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons to make a brief announcement. At the last meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons we agreed that the documents submitted by the chairmen of the working groups and the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee would be compiled by the secretariat, naturally without their being given any official status or document number. I would now like to inform delegations that this compilation will be put in the delegations' pigeon-holes on Tuesday, 2 April. In that way everyone will be able to obtain those documents there at that time.

I have no other business that I would like to put before you today, and if there is no one wishing to speak I would like to inform you that, in accordance with the timetable of meetings for this week, after this plenary meeting the Conference will hold an informal meeting devoted to the substance of agenda item 3.

I now intend to adjourn this plenary meeting. The next plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will be held on Thursday, 16 May, at 11 a.m. In a few minutes we will resume our work in an informal meeting.

The meeting rose at 10.30 a.m.